

ROCK ART, SYMBOLS, AND WORLD PRIMITIVE ART

SOCIAL STUDIES GRADES 4-6

CHART: United States Primitive Rock Art
Primitive Rock Art Glossary—Subjects and Symbols
World Primitive Rock Art

Level 4 Standards:

Level 5 Standards: 6050-01; 02;

Level 6 Standards: 6060-01; 02; 03

OBJECTIVE: The students will be introduced to primitive rock art and its locations.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION 1: Why did ancient peoples write and draw on rocks?

ESSENTIAL QUESTION 2: Did ancient peoples try to communicate with others through the rock art, and if so, what is the meaning of reoccurring symbols?

ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE

The students will be able to write about five sites in Utah where rock art has been found.

The students will be able to speculate in class discussion or list possible meanings of ten symbols in rock art.

The students will be able to list those tribes of Indians whose ancestors may have been responsible for the rock art found in Utah in class presentation or written report.

LEARNING STRATEGIES

Use maps and charts as visual aids.

Begin presentation by discussing the location of rock art in Utah. Compare the symbols found in Utah to similar symbols in Canada and Mexico.

Speculate with the students on the meaning of symbols that reoccur in different locations. Suggest that some symbols are directions, others ceremonial in nature, and still may have been recordings of important events in the lives of those who are responsible for the rock art.

Rock art has been found in caves in France, Russia, and areas where groups other than Indians have lived. Discuss the possibility that many of the rock art symbols in France and in the United States, specifically the Utah region, have the same meanings.

- Using symbols from the charts, students will make a map. Include in the map the number of people in the group, food sources, and direction the group will be going.
- Students could research rock art and present to the class, or write a report giving more information on rock art. The meanings that have been determined by archaeologists or by Indian tribes can be included.
- Students can make a large, colorful poster for display, using those symbols that appeal to them.
- Discuss with the class why rock art used symbols instead of an alphabet. After viewing pictographs in beginning alphabets, note the similarities of the symbols. Speculate on groups of people in different parts of the world using symbols; are these the same people? Is there a distinction about those objects that have been symbolized (i.e., sun, water, fish, etc.)?
- Discuss those tribes in the Utah region that may have been responsible for the rock art found.

RESOURCES

(Additional resources may be found at the end of the Guide.)

Books: Hyde, Philip, Leslie Kelen, Craig Law, Davis Sucec, John Telford, and Tom Till. *Sacred Images*. (ISBN: 0879057343)

Stuart, G. *Discovering Man's Part in the Americas*. National Geographic Society, 1969.

America's Fascinating Indian Heritage. Reader's Digest, New York, 1978.

Soundstrip: Rock Art Program (Utah, 1985)

Video: "Doodles on the Rocks"



SOCIAL STUDIES, GRADES 7-8

CHARTS: United States Primitive Rock Art
Primitive Rock Art Glossary—Subjects and Symbols
World Primitive Rock Art

Level 7-8 Standards: 6100-01; 02
Utah Studies

Level 7-8 Standards: 6120-01; 02
United States History

OBJECTIVES: The students will be introduced to an art form preserved on rock. The students

will explore the meanings and explore groups that may have been responsible for the rock art.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION 1: Why did groups of people throughout the world write or draw on rocks rather than using a different type of medium?

ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE

Have small groups of students research and present on the primitive groups who used the symbols rather than writing to convey messages. The report can be written or a PowerPoint to the class.

The students will be able to discuss the locations in Utah where rock art has been found. The students will be able to state an opinion, based on research and class discussion, about the originators of rock art found in Utah and two other locations where rock art is found.

The students will be able to speculate on the meanings of ten symbols, as well write or discuss the importance of preserving the rock art for future generations.

LEARNING STRATEGIES

The students should be able to view the charts on the <http://www.uen.org> website or the Indian Education Program in Curriculum on the Utah State Office of Education website. Using a Video iPod, the maps and charts can be projected on a white board for a visual. Begin class by discussing the location of rock art in Utah. Have class members share experiences of exploring in areas where rock art has been found.

Discuss the importance of preserving the art found on the rocks for future generations. Discuss the fact that we view it as art now; however, the people who made the rock art may have had other meanings for the symbols. The art may have been a means of communication among tribes.

Suggest that symbols found in Mexico, Canada, and Utah may have similar meanings.

“Primitive” is a word that must be fully clarified. It does not convey “savage, without spiritual beliefs”; rather, it is a stage of development not as sophisticated as we now know.

Stress to the students that rock art has been found on other continents, in areas inhabited by groups other than Indians.

Discuss the location of rock art on all continents: What similarities (such as availability of rock, humidity, dryness, presence of caves, or desert) do the sites share?

Compare the symbols of rock art and the symbols used today, such as signs (Stop, Yield, Walk, Don't Walk, and highway signs). Why do we use symbols today rather than the alphabet? Explain that the symbols used today are understood by most people, even those who do not speak English.

Resource materials can be found listed at the end of the Guide.



SOCIAL STUDIES, GRADES 9-12

CHART: United States Primitive Rock Art
Primitive Rock Art Glossary—Subjects and Symbols
World Primitive Rock Art

Level 9-12 Standards: 6200-01; 02; 03

World Cultural Geography, Part I

Level 9-12 Standards: 6220-01; 02; 03

Ancient World Civilizations

Level 9-12 Standards: 6250-01; 02

United States Studies

OBJECTIVE: The students will evaluate the rock art found in the United States and other countries, and explore the meaning of symbols as well as societies that used symbols.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION 1: Did civilizations throughout the world use symbols on rocks for communication?

ESSENTIAL QUESTION 2: Did the development of symbols on rocks progress as humans progressed throughout the world?

ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE

In a changing society, needs are met and values adjusted according to environmental conditions. What prompted the originators of rock art to discard its use?

During class discussions, the students will speculate on the meaning of many symbols found on the charts and possible reasons why use of the symbols was not continued.

The students will write about other countries where rock art has been found, and will be able to compare the meaning of the symbols; this can be a research project to be completed in small groups or as individuals.

The students will know and discuss in class two locations in Utah where rock art has been found, and describe the physical environment of these places.

LEARNING STRATEGIES

Present rock art study by discussing the location of rock art found in the United States, Canada and Mexico. Discuss the geographies of the three areas, the climatic conditions, and the types of people who were in the area at the time rock art was used.

Speculate with the students about the reasons rock art was used. Explore symbols and their meaning, and the use of symbols instead of an alphabet.

Discuss preservation of the rock art—is this a value, art appreciation, or cultural act—or is it all three? Which groups of people in Utah would see the rock art as culture, and which see it as art? Have students express their opinions of rock art.

Have small groups report to the class on the similarities of the symbols discovered in various parts of the world. Include in report the peoples who may have originated rock art, speculate on the meaning of the symbols (what message is being conveyed?), and compare symbols in rock art to the meaning of signs used today for international understanding.

Do students today use symbols in place of words in art, music, homework, or play?

Class presentation: Recorded an event for presentation using symbols to convey meaning of a story, game, weather, names, etc.

Resource materials can be found listed at the end of the Guide.